



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

the "Roast Pig" or "Sarah Battle" essay, we do not forget who wrote them. And the thought of those essays, as fresh now as when Mrs. Battle first called cribbage an ungrammatical game, make us sure that he who can ever find it in his heart to think that Elia had better be taken up to the garret, or laid out on a top shelf, must be, not an advocate for modern times, but a very *advocatus Diaboli*.

13. — *The Picture of St. John*. By BAYARD TAYLOR. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1866. 16mo. pp. vi., 220.

A PIECE of conscientious literary work, patiently elaborated upon a well-digested plan, and carefully thought out in the details, is so rare in our hurried generation, that it merits respectful consideration. Mr. Taylor's new poem is of this kind. It shows marks of mature design, adequately sustained by careful finish in its parts. A poem of more than two hundred pages, which carries the reader along with interested pleasure to the end, must have in it something of a higher quality than is at all common. We can think of no other long American poem of evenly sustained power except Mr. Longfellow's "Golden Legend." In that we have the finest aroma of the Middle Ages; and through all the brilliant episodes of picturesque scenery there runs a connecting thread of personal interest and tender human sympathy, unbroken to the end. Mr. Taylor's poem, on the other hand, is modern in more than one sense. It is essentially and designedly subjective. It gives the history of the development and training of an artistic nature, beginning with the pure joy of sensation, arriving at a happy poise of all its faculties in the visible reproduction and definition of its emotion through art, and at last refined and perfected by sorrow. The story, though somewhat improbable, is told with grace and feeling, and varied with many German and Italian landscapes, broadly and warmly painted with that idealization in which memory is so skilful. The defect of the poem is a too great introversion of the thought and sentiment, inherent perhaps in its very nature as a monologue, — a sin which it shares with a great part of the poetry of the century. But the fault strikes us more because, while Mr. Taylor's real object is to describe, as Beattie has done in his "Minstrel," the influences which awaken and train the artistic consciousness of a poet, he has made his hero a painter. It is, perhaps, true that certain qualities are common to the natures of both; but however it may be with a poet, we doubt whether a painter would go far in his art who was forever analyzing his own emotion and prying into its constituents, instead of surrendering himself joyously to the beauty of the

outward world, and finding his satisfaction in the processes of his art, rather than in the metaphysics of it. The modern habit of using the word "art" with so comprehensive a meaning will do mischief, and has already, we think, done not a little, by leading both artists and critics to lose sight of the limits which divide the several arts from each other.

Mr. Taylor has written his poem in a stanza which keeps the promise of the *ottava rima* to the eye, yet breaks it so cunningly to the ear that we are hardly conscious of the cheat. By changing it with the position of his rhymes, he has produced a measure which has all the freedom of blank verse, without giving up too much of the sweetness which the ear expects in those mated closes which "meet as they did kiss." Alfred de Musset took the same liberty with the *sestina*, and, as it seems to us, with advantage. The octave of course allows a greater variety of combination, and Mr. Taylor tells us in his Preface that he has distributed the rhymes of his stanza in seventy different ways. We are not sure that something is not lost by this, and that it would not perhaps be a higher achievement to escape uniformity by varying the pauses of the verse, rather than by shifting the places of the rhyme. We should not like to see the old ways deserted, merely to escape difficulty, which is, after all, the best teacher of dignified ease in versification. One advantage of regularly recurring rhyme to a real poet is, that it limits diffuseness, and insists on having the thought expressed in the compactest way. But those are objections that we should make to the experiment in advance. They yield to the convincing argument of success, and we think Mr. Taylor has succeeded. His verse is full, harmonious, flowing, and peculiarly adapted to the treatment of a theme in which reflection, narrative, and description are continually interchanging.

The poem would have gained by compression. It would have been more effective if shortened by a third. We could spare without regret a number of stanzas in which Mr. Taylor philosophizes, for the metaphysic is certainly not his strongest point. He is happiest when he looks about him and gathers into sheaves of verse the harvest of his eye. When he undertakes to expound the laws of mind, he becomes misty, and therefore tedious. The artist, when he volunteers to be his own lawyer in these matters, hath a fool to his client. His business is to show the thing itself as it is visible to the imagination, and not to describe the way in which he arrived at the perception of it. We do not want Hegel or any other moulder of intellectual fog in our poetry, any more than a cookery-book in our soup. How a poet came to do or think anything is nothing to his purpose, and may be safely left to be discussed afterwards by those anatomical lecturers who have made us

understand the complicated mechanism of our minds so thoroughly that we feel a disease in every part of them. It seems to us that the elder poets trusted themselves very confidently to their instincts, and left the metaphysics to take care of themselves. When a bard begins solemnly,

“Of mind and its mysterious agencies,”

we always seem to see a sign-board warning us that “this road is unsafe for travel.” In poetry we want the gem set in its golden ring of verse so as best to show its lustre, and not the miner's diary or a geological section of the shaft. To be sure, Mr. Taylor has written his poem in the first person; and if there are some manifest advantages, there are also many temptations in a stanza beginning with “I.” Where he yields to the bent of his own nature, and is frankly himself, (which, oddly enough, a poet is seldom sure of being when he makes an *alter ego* of his hero,) we have no complaints to make. There is great picturesqueness, great sweetness and truth of feeling, and many a verse over which the reader will linger for its gracious delicacy. The situations are almost all happily conceived, and harmonize with the landscape background with which Mr. Taylor is so skilful in setting them off. The poem, as a sustained flight in the higher regions of song, will add much to Mr. Taylor's reputation with competent judges.

There are a few stanzas in the first book—and in point of expression they are among the happiest of the whole poem—against which we feel bound to protest on the ground of good morals. Mr. Taylor certainly meant no harm in them, but he has allowed himself to slip too readily into the modern fallacy which confounds the sensuous with the sensual. We do not believe in any dual arrangement of the soul, in which a “nun” is paired off with a “bacchante.” If there is such a thing as an individual essence which feels a soil in any part through its whole exquisite contexture, it is the human spirit. Shakespeare looked much deeper than this comfortable theory when he makes Lady Macbeth vainly strive to wash from her hands the stain of mere connivance. Catullus would not help the matter much by telling us that the filthiest of his poems were written by a priestess of Isis, who went halves with a vestal virgin in the ownership of him. If there is a chastity of the soul which thinks no evil, there is no less a chastity of the senses whose finer ear hears the sinuous approach of evil ere it come, and finds lust more loathsome when it has slimed itself with sentiment. There is no earthly reason why an “artist” should be allowed to avail himself of a plea of double identity, which we should scout in the case of a housebreaker or horse-thief. Surely we need take no special pains to make temptation easy to us. That because we have particularly

keen nerves of sensation we should allow our senses the dominion over us, is twaddle. We fancy a Fijian chief saying to his wife, "My higher nature adores you; but really I have such a fine set of teeth, and you are so tender, that a due respect for the artistic part of me will compel me to bake you to-morrow."

- 14.—*BEETHOVEN's Letters.* (1790–1826.) *From the Collection of Dr. Ludwig Nohl. Also his Letters to the Archduke Rudolph, Cardinal-Archbishop of Olmütz, K. W., from the Collection of Dr. Ludwig Ritter von Köchel.* Translated by LADY WALLACE. With a Portrait and Fac-simile. New York: Hurd and Houghton. 1867. 2 vols. 16mo. pp. xviii., 234; ix., 257.

OF the three collections of letters of famous musical composers recently published, — Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Beethoven, — the personal interest is in inverse proportion to the greatness of their respective authors. The more complete the power of expression in tones, the less is that of expression in words. These letters of Beethoven contain scarcely a trace of those spiritual qualities which are so fully developed in his music. They are little more than the record of the trivial concerns of his daily life, — a life thoroughly commonplace in all external conditions. It is an irreverence to the memory of such a genius as Beethoven to display to the public these disconnected and empty trifles as an exhibition of his character; and it is doing injustice to his admirers to offer them such material without at least fastening the odds and ends together with some slight thread of biographical elucidation. The well-known main facts of Beethoven's discordant life, his rough yet sensitive nature, his deafness, his ill-health, his vehement but changing attachments to more than one woman, his care of, and his disappointment in, his nephew, are, of course, all brought to mind in the course of the letters; and the foot-notes afford explanations of some of the minor points touched upon; but the volumes are silent, for the most part, with regard to Beethoven's personal relations with his correspondents, the nature of which is often not to be inferred from these scraps of writing, and the knowledge of which might perhaps confer an accidental value on them.

The most interesting letter in this collection, and one of the few which have any proper autobiographical character, is one written at the age of thirty-two, and addressed nominally to those whom he called his "unbrotherly brothers," but in fact to the world at large.